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Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015)

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the twenty-fifth is submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), paragraph 10 of Security Council resolution 2165 (2014), paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 2191 (2014) and paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 2258 (2015), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report, every 30 days, on the implementation of the resolutions by all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. The information contained herein is based on the data available to United Nations agencies on the ground, from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, other Syrian sources as well as open sources. Data from United Nations agencies on their humanitarian deliveries have been reported for the period from 1 to 29 February 2016. More recent data have been included when available.

II. Major developments

A. Developments on the ground

3. The statement adopted by the International Syria Support Group on 11 February 2016 in Munich and the adoption of resolution 2268 (2016) by the Security Council on 26 February 2016, which outlined the terms of the cessation of hostilities, resulted in some positive changes on the ground during the latter part of the reporting period. Since 26 February, the establishment by the International Syria Support Group of the task force on humanitarian access, on 12 February, has underpinned a greater focus on access and reaching people in need. The United Nations has delivered assistance to 150,000 people in 10 of the 18 besieged areas, through the efforts of United Nations inter-agency convoys, plus tens of thousands more in hard-to-reach areas. The cessation of hostilities, which started on 27 February, has held by and large. Various sources have reported that the number of military activities and air strikes has decreased significantly. The Support Group task force on the ceasefire continues to monitor the situation and take steps to sustain the cessation of hostilities. The United Nations operations centre,

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established in support of the task force on the ceasefire, has received reports of a broad range of incidents of non-compliance, from air strikes and ground offensives to sporadic gunfire and exchange of mortars in isolated areas.

4. In February, prior to the cessation of hostilities, widespread conflict and high levels of violence continued throughout the Syrian Arab Republic. Indiscriminate and disproportionate aerial bombings and ground attacks by Government forces, supported by their allies, and indiscriminate shelling by non-State armed opposition groups and designated terrorist groups[1] continued to kill, injure and displace civilians. The conduct of hostilities by all parties was characterized by a widespread disregard for the rules of international humanitarian law and the obligation of all parties to protect civilians. The United Nations and partners received reports that over 177,000 people were displaced across seven governorates in February.

5. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) documented attacks by all parties to the conflict, as well as unattributed attacks that resulted in the killing of more than 470 civilians and injuring of hundreds more during the reporting period.[2] These included air strikes and shelling with the use of artillery, barrel bombs, mortars and rockets, as well as car and suicide bombings in populated areas. Private property, civilian infrastructure and protected structures, such as schools and hospitals, also continued to be damaged and destroyed.

6. Fighting continued throughout Aleppo governorate until the cessation of hostilities went into effect. Government of Syria ground offensives in northern Aleppo, backed by heavy aerial support by Syrian and Russian Federation air assets, reportedly resulted in many civilian deaths in February, according to open sources. In addition, over 63,000 people were displaced from eastern Aleppo city and northern rural areas of the city, mostly to areas close to the border with Turkey. Civilian infrastructure was also severely damaged. According to information received by OHCHR, on 1 and 2 February, air strikes hit two clinics in Anadan, rendering them out of service and killing eight civilians. On 15 February, air strikes allegedly hit two schools in Atareb and Azaz, reportedly killing 15 people and injuring many students, according to open sources. Meanwhile, Syrian Democratic Forces also launched advances against non-State armed opposition groups in northern Aleppo governorate. In southern Aleppo governorate, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) temporarily seized the strategic town of Khanaser from Government forces for several days; as a result, the main supply road was cut from Homs into Aleppo province from 19 to 29 February.

7. In Aleppo city and surrounding areas, fighting continued between Government forces and their allies, non-State armed opposition groups and ISIL, resulting in

[1] On 30 May 2013, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusrah Front were designated as terrorist groups by the Security Council in accordance with resolution 1267 (1999). The two groups operate in the Syrian Arab Republic.

[2] These figures are based on incidents documented by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) during the reporting period according to its human rights monitoring methodology. It is not a full representation of all incidents that may have impacted civilians during the reporting period. Despite repeated requests, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has not granted access to its territory to either OHCHR or the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic established by the Human Rights Council.

death and injury. For example, OHCHR reported that on 7 and 8 February, two air strikes hit residential areas of Aleppo city and Kafr Hamra village, reportedly killing 38 civilians. Meanwhile, non-State armed opposition groups also continued the shelling of Government-controlled neighbourhoods, including Suleimaniya and Masaken al-Sabeel, reportedly killing over 40 civilians, including at least 12 children, and injuring nearly 50, according to open sources. On 24 February, according to OHCHR, mortars fell on the predominantly Kurdish-inhabited area of Sheikh Maqsoud, killing 19 civilians, including three children, according to open sources. Fighting, including sniper fire, has reportedly continued in March between the Kurdish People's Protection Unit (YPG) forces and non-State armed groups along the Castello route, one of the last remaining major routes into the eastern part of Aleppo city. Meanwhile, the water supply to Aleppo governorate from Al Khafseh water treatment facilities on the Euphrates River was restored on 3 March, after being cut in mid-January by ISIL, restoring services to 2 million people.

8. In Idlib governorate, towns controlled by non-State armed opposition groups were subjected to air strikes by the Government and its allied forces, causing destruction and civilian death and injury. On 15 February, according to OHCHR, missiles allegedly fired by pro-Government forces hit two hospitals in Maarat al-Numan, killing at least 15 civilians. According to OHCHR, on 24 February, air strikes from unknown sources repeatedly hit a marketplace in Ariha, killing 13 civilians, including two children, and injuring 28 civilians. Civilian infrastructure was also affected by the fighting. For instance, on 17 February, air strikes reportedly hit a school in Taftanaz, killing a teacher and injuring several students, according to open sources. Fighting across Idlib governorate displaced over 12,000 people in early and mid-February.

9. In Latakia governorate, fighting also continued between Government forces, with Syrian and Russian air support, and non-State armed opposition groups. On 18 February, Government forces regained control of the town of Kansaba in the Akrad mountains. The fighting has displaced over 3,700 people in Latakia governorate, from Kansaba to Darkoush in Jisr al-Shoughur district, and from Rabeea to Harim in Idlib governorate.

10. Fighting was also reported in Damascus and Rif Dimashq governorates. Fighting between Government forces, backed by Russian and Syrian air support, and non-State armed opposition groups, continued in and around Madimayet Elsham and eastern Ghutah, as well as the Jobar district in Damascus. Information received by OHCHR indicates that some 46 civilians were killed and dozens injured as a result of multiple air strikes on the besieged town of Madimayet Elsham and towns in eastern Ghutah during February. For example, on 1 February, a mortar struck a school in Baqqin in Rif Dimashq, killing one student and injuring at least three others, according to open sources. On 10 February, OHCHR received allegations that cluster munitions were used on residential areas of Duma, reportedly killing eight civilians, including five children, and injuring 24 civilians, including five children. On 18 February, according to information received by OHCHR, Government forces dropped barrel bombs on residential areas of Al-Marj area in eastern Ghutah, reportedly killing eight civilians, including a child, and destroying Al-Marj Hospital. On 19 and 26 February, OHCHR reported that pro-Government forces carried out air strikes on Duma, including on residential areas, killing 14 civilians, including six children, and injuring at least 27. On the

same day, OHCHR indicated that at least nine civilians were allegedly killed and four injured when Government forces dropped scores of barrel bombs, and artillery and missiles were fired on Darayya.

11. Non-State armed opposition groups and designated terrorist groups also launched several attacks in Damascus and Rif Dimashq, with the city of Damascus subjected to shelling and mortar attacks prior to the cessation of hostilities. OHCHR reported that ISIL claimed responsibility for the explosion of a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device on 9 February in the Masaken Barzeh area of Damascus, killing seven civilians and injuring 15 others. ISIL also claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing on a marketplace in the Sayyida Zeinab shrine area in Rif Dimashq on 21 February, killing 83 civilians, including many women and children, and injuring over 100.

12. Fighting was reported in the southern rural parts of Hama and northern countryside of Homs during February, particularly around the towns of Hirbnafsah, Hola, Talbiseh and Rastan. Humanitarian conditions in those areas reportedly continue to deteriorate. In Homs city, civilian casualties and injuries were also reported as a result of attacks by designated terrorist groups. For example, information received by OHCHR indicated that on 21 February, two vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices were detonated in the neighbourhood of Al-Zahra in Homs city, killing at least 56 civilians and injuring over 100. The attack was claimed by ISIL. The local agreement in place in Al Wa'er, Homs, also continued to hold, despite reported violations of the agreement and the fact that some provisions of the agreement remain to be implemented.

13. In Dayr al-Zawr governorate, on 2 February, ISIL reportedly fired mortars at Joura in the besieged parts of Dayr al-Zawr city, resulting in the killing of three children and injuring nine civilians, including two children. On 23 February, according to information received by OHCHR, ISIL fired mortar rounds on Joura, reportedly killing at least five civilians, including a child.

14. In Hasakah governorate, OHCHR received reports of air strikes from unknown sources hitting civilian infrastructure and killing at least 67 civilians. For example, on 16 February, air strikes struck the only operating bakery in Al-Shaddadi town, reportedly killing at least 18 civilians, including many women and children queuing for bread, and injuring at least 15. On the following day, air strikes hit southern rural Hasakah, reportedly killing 36 civilians, including women and children, and injuring 30 others.

15. Fighting continued in southern Syria during the reporting period. In Dar'a governorate, Government forces backed by air support advanced further south by seizing control of the towns of Atman and Sheikh Miskine. OHCHR received reports of 25 civilian casualties as a result of heavy fighting, including from mortar attacks. The Government of Syria informed OHCHR that on 3 February, mortar attacks carried out by non-State armed opposition groups killed 17 civilians and injured 101 people, including women and children, when civilians were heading to their places of work and study. On 9 February, Médecins sans frontières announced publicly that air strikes had hit a hospital supported by the organization in Dar'a governorate, killing three people and wounding at least six, including a nurse. On 14 February, a school in Al-Balad was reportedly fired upon by unknown perpetrators, severely injuring at least three children attending classes. In February, over 50,000 people are estimated to have been displaced in Dar'a as a result of the

fighting. At the end of February, a local agreement was reportedly reached in Ibtta'a and Da'el between Government forces and local community representatives.

16. The Russian Federation as well as the United States of America-led coalition forces continued to carry out air strikes in Syria throughout February, according to reports received from official sources. While not providing data for the full month, the Russian Ministry of Defence confirmed that it had carried out over 1,253 "combat sorties" in February, engaging 5,796 targets in the governorates of Aleppo, Hasakah, Raqqa, Dar'a, Dayr al-Zawr, Hama, Homs and Latakia. Meanwhile, the United States Central Command confirmed that at least 189 strikes were carried out by the coalition in the month of February against ISIL targets in the governorates of Aleppo, Hasakah, Raqqa and Dayr al-Zawr. OHCHR received numerous reports of air strikes reportedly carried out by international actors in which civilians were killed or injured, including in Aleppo, Raqqa, Dayr al-Zawr, Idlib and Hasakah governorates. Some 113 people were reportedly killed and dozens more injured in those air strikes. However, OHCHR was not able to adequately verify the origin of the reported air strikes.

B. Human rights

17. The scale and severity of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law and human rights abuses, including abductions, summary executions, degrading and inhumane treatment, and the recruitment of children, remained grave during the reporting period.

18. The Office of the High Commissioner received reports that, on 12 February, the police faction of the Kurdish People's Protection Unit, the Assayish, raided the house of an Arab lawyer, south of Tel Abyad in Raqqa governorate, and forcibly detained him, allegedly for having been outspoken regarding abuses against civilians committed by YPG forces. OHCHR also reported that on 5 February, YPG forces demolished the houses of 41 civilians in the Al-Eghebish area of Tal Tamer, Hasakah governorate, accusing the Arab owners of being ISIL supporters.

19. OHCHR received information that on 22 February, the Assayish allegedly forcibly recruited a 14-year-old boy in the Al-Iskan neighbourhood of Tel Abyad in Raqqa governorate. Additionally, OHCHR received information of at least 11 cases of children aged between 12 and 16 being forcibly recruited into YPG and taken to the Ain al-Batt camp in Aleppo governorate.

20. On 5 February, ISIL reportedly stoned a man to death for adultery in Albo Kamal in Dayr al-Zawr governorate. On 6 February, ISIL allegedly shot a woman and her son-in-law for blasphemy in Al-Mayadeen in Dayr al-Zawr governorate. On 7 February, in the same town, ISIL reportedly beheaded a man and woman for blasphemy. On 10 February, ISIL released video footage showing the execution of four men from Raqqa governorate, who were placed in a car filled with explosives. A young child was shown detonating the explosives from a safe distance. The four men had been arrested by ISIL approximately two months earlier on the grounds of spying.

21. During the reporting period, according to information received by OHCHR, ISIL allegedly released some of the civilians who were detained while fleeing an ISIL attack on the besieged area of Al-Bghiliya, Dayr al-Zawr governorate in

January 2016. OHCHR also reported that on 22 February, ISIL freed the final group of Syrian Assyrians it was holding. They were part of a group of least 200 Syrian Assyrians that ISIL had detained in February 2015.

C. Humanitarian response

22. In February 2016, United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need through all modalities from within the Syrian Arab Republic and across borders pursuant to resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015) (see table 1). Non-governmental organizations also continued to deliver assistance to people, in line with the figures recorded in previous months. The Government of Syria continued to provide basic services to areas under its control as well as in many areas beyond its control.

Table 1
Number of people reached by organizations in February 2016

Organization	*Number of people reached*
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	– (procurement of inputs for spring planting season)
International Organization for Migration	35 000
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	485 000
United Nations Children's Fund	1 500 000
United Nations Development Programme	321 000
United Nations Population Fund	266 000
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	336 000
World Food Programme	3 800 000
World Health Organization	810 000

Note: United Nations and International Organization for Migration figures only. No information was received from national non-governmental organizations or from international non-governmental organizations.

23. Cross-border deliveries continued during the reporting period. As at 29 February, the United Nations and its implementing partners had sent 283 shipments from Turkey and Jordan to the Syrian Arab Republic under the terms of resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015), benefiting millions of people. Map 1 contained in the annex to the present report provides more information on United Nations cross-border convoys in February (see annex). In line with Security Council resolutions, the United Nations notified the Syrian authorities in advance of each shipment, including content, destination and number

of beneficiaries. No reports were received of any convoys being refused or found to be irregular.

24. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism continued its operations in Jordan and Turkey. In February, it monitored 27 United Nations humanitarian shipments consisting of 709 trucks, confirming the humanitarian nature of each, and notifying the Syrian authorities after each shipment. The Monitoring Mechanism continued to benefit from excellent cooperation with the Governments of Jordan and Turkey.

25. In February and early March 2016, inter-agency convoys to the besieged and hard-to-reach locations listed in table 2 below were completed, assisting almost 259,000 people in need (see also annex, map 2).

Table 2
Inter-agency convoys from February to mid-March 2016

Date	*Location*	*Type of assistance*
4 February	Al Wa'er (Homs)	Food, health, non-food items, nutrition, water and sanitation support and education supplies. Medical supplies, including surgical items and diarrhoea kits were removed by Government security forces
17 February	Madimayet Elsham (Rif Dimashq)	First half of the intended food and wheat flour, health and nutrition supplies. Some health materials were not allowed onto the convoy
	Foah, Kefraya (Idlib)	Food, wheat flour, medicines, nutrition
	Madaya (Rif Dimashq)	Food, wheat flour, medicines, nutrition
	Zabadani (Rif Dimashq)	Food, wheat flour, nutrition
23 February	Madimayet Elsham (Rif Dimashq)	Second half of the intended food and wheat flour, health and nutrition supplies. A dialysis machine and medicine were permitted, but other health materials were not allowed onto the convoy

Date	*Location*	*Type of assistance*
	Kafr Batna town, Kafr Batna subdistrict (Rif Dimashq)	Food, medicines, medical and nutrition supplies. A portion of the planned medicines, medical and nutrition supplies were removed by the Ministry of Health
29 February	Madimayet Elsham (Rif Dimashq)	Water and sanitation support, non-food items
2 March	Madimayet Elsham (Rif Dimashq)	Portions of the previously excluded medicine and medical supplies
4 March	Ain Tarma, Hazzeh and Saqba, in Kafr Batna subdistrict (Rif Dimashq)	Food, medicines, medical and nutrition supplies. A portion of the planned medicines, medical and nutrition supplies were removed by the Ministry of Health
7 March	Beit Sawa, Hammura and Jisreen in Kafr Batna subdistrict (Rif Dimashq)	Food, medicines, medical and nutrition supplies. A portion of the planned medicines, medical and nutrition supplies were removed by the Ministry of Health
16 March	Boudan (Rif Dimashq)	Food, wheat flour, medicine, medical, nutrition supplies and non-food items

26. In February, United Nations agencies also undertook single agency deliveries to cross-line and hard-to-reach locations. For example, the World Food Programme (WFP), in coordination with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, reached 19,000 people through cross-line deliveries in Tiba, Jirud and Raheiba, Rif Dimashq, as well as Tleisiyeh in Hama. The World Health Organization (WHO), through its focal points, sent 25 malaria diagnostic kits each to Dayr al-Zawr and Raqqa governorates. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) delivered assistance to some 40,000 people in the formerly besieged areas of Nubul and Zahraa in Aleppo governorate. In response to the water crisis in Aleppo, UNICEF continued to transport water into western Aleppo, sufficient to meet the needs of 375,000 people on a daily basis. On 23 February, UNICEF commenced transporting water to parts of eastern Aleppo to meet the needs of an estimated 30,000 people.

Humanitarian access

27. Notwithstanding the recent progress made in accessing some besieged and hard-to-reach locations, the delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need of

assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic remained challenging in many areas of the country as a result of active conflict, shifting conflict lines and deliberate restrictions by the parties on the movement of people and goods.

28. Access to the 4.6 million people living in besieged and hard-to-reach locations remained of critical concern. During the reporting period, the United Nations agencies and partners reached 48 of the 154 hard-to-reach locations (31 per cent). Details of assistance to people in hard-to-reach areas in February 2016 are contained in table 3 below. Nearly half of the people in hard-to-reach areas are in areas controlled by ISIL, in which the United Nations has extremely limited access.

Table 3
United Nations deliveries to the 4.6 million people in hard-to-reach areas, February 2016

Sector (United Nations delivery only)	*Number of people reached (as percentage of 4.6 million)*
Food security	359 000 (7.9)
Health	294 000 (6.4)
Non-food items	160 000 (3.5)
Water, sanitation and hygiene	65 882 (1.4)

29. Since the beginning of 2016, 58 inter-agency convoy requests have been submitted, to reach 1.87 million people in need across 47 besieged and hard-to-reach locations, the status of which is outlined in table 4 below. On 10 March, the Government of Syria approved United Nations requests to reach 15 hard-to-reach locations. In addition, the Government of Syria requested the United Nations to assist a number of other areas in Aleppo, Latakia and Rif Dimashq governorates. On 17 March, under simplified procedures proposed by the Government of Syria, the United Nations submitted an inter-agency convoy plan to reach 356,200 people in 11 hard-to-reach and besieged areas, in April. Altogether, the United Nations and partners aim to reach 1.1 million people in 26 besieged and hard-to-reach locations through inter-agency convoys by end of April, if all approvals are granted and convoys proceed.

Table 4
Status of inter-agency convoy requests in 2016

Status of requests	*Number of requests*
Approved and proceeded	13
Approved in principle; awaiting final facilitation letters	11
Submitted and pending approval by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic	34
Total submitted in 2016	**58**

30. Active conflict in several governorates hindered the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance, as well as people's access to essential services. Major

supply routes from Damascus to southern Syria, as well as north to Aleppo, remained vulnerable to insecurity due to ongoing clashes. For example, the Khanaser road, which connects Aleppo to Homs, was closed from 19 to 29 February due to an attack by ISIL. The closure affected all United Nations field missions to and from Aleppo, as well as the dispatch of humanitarian supplies. The disruption of the supply line reportedly resulted in drastic increases in the price of food and fuel and in shortages of fresh products in Aleppo. Meanwhile, the frequent disruptions of the Homs-Salamiyeh-Hama road, owing to fighting along the route, continue to affect all United Nations missions to Hama. Fighting and shifting conflict lines in Aleppo governorate in early February also continued to disrupt humanitarian operations, particularly from Turkey into eastern Aleppo city.

31. Deliberate interference and restrictions by the parties also continued to prevent aid delivery. For example, WFP continued to be unable to reach people in need in areas of the country controlled by ISIL, due to the inability to work independently and to monitor activities. This affected some 720,000 people in almost all of Dayr al-Zawr and Raqqa governorates, parts of rural Aleppo and eastern rural Homs, as well as pockets of southern rural Hasakah and north-western rural Hama. Meanwhile, 14 requests from WFP to the Syrian authorities to reach 67,310 people in Herne, Al-Qastal, Al-Tal and Halbon were not approved, on account of security issues.

32. The Nusaybin/Qamishly crossing in Hasakah governorate has been temporarily closed by the Turkish authorities, as a result of security concerns, since 27 December 2015. The price of most of the basic food commodities has reportedly increased by up to 100 per cent since November 2015 in the governorate. Reports have been received that people have adopted extreme coping strategies, including eating only one meal per day and drastically reducing the types of food consumed.

33. On 1 March, the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a note verbale to the United Nations proposing simplified procedures for the approval of inter-agency convoys across conflict lines that would reduce the number of steps in the process and improve predictability in the timelines. Under the new mechanism, the Government of Syria would advise its approval of a monthly plan for inter-agency convoys of the United Nations and partners to besieged and hard-to-reach locations, within seven working days of receipt of the plan. All necessary facilitation letters for the movement of the convoy would be approved within three working days. On 17 March, the United Nations submitted the first monthly inter-agency convoy plan pursuant to the new procedures.

34. As of 29 February, 67 United Nations visa requests (either new visas or renewals) remained pending, 31 of which had exceeded the 15 working day limit. In February, a total of 108 visas for United Nations staff from nine different agencies were approved, 44 of which were new visas and 64 of which were renewals.

35. A total of 16 international non-governmental organizations are authorized to operate in the Syrian Arab Republic. Two additional international non-governmental organizations have applied to the Government of Syria for approval to operate. Such organizations continued to face a series of administrative hurdles and restrictions that affect their ability to operate, including in gaining permission to undertake independent needs assessments. The Government of Syria, however, has expressed a willingness to address, on a case-by-case and temporary basis, long-standing

requests to partner with national humanitarian organizations and to open sub-offices.

36. The number of national non-governmental organizations authorized to partner with United Nations organizations increased from 141 to 142 in February. Authorized national non-governmental organizations continue to operate under complex procedures in partnering with United Nations agencies.

Besieged areas

37. Of the 4.6 million people living in hard-to-reach areas, some 486,700 people remained besieged. This includes some 274,200 people besieged by the Government of Syria in various locations in Rif Dimashq; 6,000 people besieged by the Government of Syria and non-State armed opposition groups in Yarmouk in Damascus; some 200,000 people in Dayr al-Zawr city who are besieged by ISIL; and some 12,500 people who are besieged by non-State armed opposition groups and the Nusrah Front in Foah and Kefraya in Idlib governorate.

38. Some progress was recorded in reaching besieged areas during February and early March. In February and early March, some 150,000 people (31 per cent) were assisted in 10 of the 18 besieged areas through inter-agency convoys, while some people in Yarmouk could go and receive assistance in Yalda, an adjacent town. However, the Syrian authorities have not granted approvals for parts of eastern Ghutah (including Duma, Harasta, Arbin, Zamalka and Zabadin) and Darayya despite repeated requests from the United Nations. Humanitarian conditions in these areas are reportedly dire; the United Nations stands ready to deliver assistance to these besieged locations as soon as access is granted. The flow of commercial supplies through official routes remained largely blocked, leading to high prices for the commodities that reach besieged areas through unofficial and irregular supply lines. Freedom of movement remained heavily restricted, though limited numbers were sporadically allowed to exit and re-enter some besieged areas.

39. In eastern Ghutah, Rif Dimashq, some 176,500 people remain besieged by Government forces in the following locations: Duma, eastern Harasta, Arbin, Zamalka, Ain Tarma, Hammura, Jisrein, Kafr Batna, Saqba and Zabadin. The United Nations and Syrian Arab Red Crescent convoys reached Kafr Batna town, Ain Tarma, Saqba, Jisrein and Hammura on 23 February and 4 and 7 March, delivering multisectoral assistance for some 46,800 people overall. A portion of the planned medical supplies were not allowed to be loaded onto each of the convoys by Ministry of Health officials, despite prior approval from Syrian authorities. Some items for the prevention of child malnutrition were also rejected. As part of the 4 March convoy, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, in cooperation with UNICEF, WHO and the Ministry of Health, delivered 21,000 vaccines to its Duma sub-branch for distribution throughout eastern Ghutah. A rapid assessment found no evident sign of malnutrition, with local organizations noting that access to food was not a problem as the area surrounding Kafr Batna is fertile agricultural land and a variety of meat and dairy sources are accessible. It was observed that there was a very high level of recruitment of children by armed groups. Meanwhile, mobility restrictions for students were reported, blocking their access to tertiary education.

40. In Madaya (and Buqayn) in Rif Dimashq governorate, some 42,000 people remain besieged by Government forces. Reports of severe malnutrition continue to be received. In Foah and Kefraya in Idlib governorate, some 12,500 people remain

besieged by non-State armed opposition groups and the Nusrah Front. United Nations and Syrian Arab Red Crescent convoys delivered multisectoral assistance sufficient for one month for the populations of Madaya, Foah and Kefraya on 17 February. UNICEF inpatient stabilization units were rejected from the loading list and therefore not loaded onto the convoys.

41. In Zabadani, in Rif Dimashq governorate, some 700 people remain besieged by Government forces. On 17 February, a United Nations and Syrian Arab Red Crescent convoy delivered multisectoral assistance for 1,000 people, sufficient for one month, to Zabadani.

42. In Darayya, in Rif Dimashq, about 4,000 people remain besieged by Government forces. The United Nations has been unable to deliver assistance to Darayya since November 2012.

43. In Madimayet Elsham, in Rif Dimashq, about 45,000 people remain besieged by Government forces. The United Nations and Syrian Arab Red Crescent convoys delivered assistance to Madimayet Elsham on 17, 23 and 29 February. Government security forces removed health-care items, including midwifery kits and diarrhoea kits. A portion of these materials were subsequently delivered to Madimayet Elsham on 2 March. A rapid assessment found many cases of family separation, lack of civil registration, lack of documentation renewal, increased child marriage, child recruitment by non-State armed groups and lack of access to education. In addition, a significant number of female-headed households and many unaccompanied and separated children were recorded. A number of armed teenagers were also observed.

44. In Yarmouk, in Damascus, some 6,000 people are besieged by Government forces and non-State armed opposition groups. All operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Yarmouk remained suspended in February. However, on 13 February, UNRWA was given blanket permission to resume food distributions in neighbouring Yalda for the first time since June 2015. UNRWA completed its first round of aid delivery in Yalda, reaching a total of 5,700 families, including families who could come from Yarmouk to collect the aid, with food and non-food items. During distribution missions, UNRWA staff observed that compared to the situation during its operations in April 2015, there was noticeably less desperation in the appearance and demeanour of the refugees coming forward to receive food and other assistance.

45. In the Government-controlled western neighbourhoods of Dayr al-Zawr city, some 200,000 people are besieged by ISIL. The humanitarian situation in the besieged area continues to deteriorate, with shortages of food and medical care and severe malnutrition reported during the reporting period. On 24 February, WFP carried out its first test of a high altitude airdrop over the besieged city, dropping food assistance sufficient for 2,500 people. However, the operation encountered technical difficulties as a result of changing weather conditions and unexpected high winds. Some of the food pallets that were airdropped drifted astray and are so far unaccounted for or cannot be reached, while others landed in or around the drop zone but were damaged, as the parachutes did not open properly. Given the complexity of the operation, WFP is working to find solutions for the technical issues encountered and is carrying out tests in Jordan, to attempt again to airdrop life-saving aid for the besieged population.

Free passage of medical supplies, personnel and equipment

46. While health-care facilities have special protected status under international humanitarian law, attacks on medical facilities continue unabated. The United Nations and health partners received reports, which are in the process of being verified by the United Nations and partner organizations, of 30 attacks on medical facilities in February.

47. The World Health Organization and other health partners delivered some 294,000 medical treatments in hard-to-reach and cross-line locations in Aleppo, Idlib, Rif Dimashq, Homs, Dayr al-Zawr and Raqqa governorates. Between 31 January and 5 February 2016, WHO supported partners for a round of polio vaccination in Talbiseh, Rastan and Houle in northern rural Homs, which reached 39,769 children under the age of five, more than 95 per cent of the target. Since mid-February, UNICEF has supported a local polio vaccination campaign in Raqqa for 200,000 children under five. On 16 February, UNICEF delivered a shipment of routine immunization supplies to Dayr al-Zawr to reactivate routine immunization services for the first time since April 2015. These services will target 40,000 children under one year of age.

48. In 2016, WHO has submitted 17 individual requests to the Government of Syria to send medicines and medical supplies to hard-to-reach and besieged locations in nine governorates, targeting over 2.5 million people. Two of these requests have been approved, to send a mobile clinic to Madaya and to deliver medicines and medical supplies to eastern Aleppo city, while the remaining 15 requests are pending. WHO has further received two approvals for requests submitted in 2015 to reach Duma, Rastan, Talbiseh and Taldu in northern rural Homs.

49. Despite the improved access to besieged areas, some 80,000 medical treatments were not allowed on, or removed from, humanitarian convoys to besieged areas during the reporting period. Some 60,700 medical treatments were removed from the convoy to Madimayet Elsham on 17 February, including 50 per cent of the items from the inter-agency emergency health kits, 90 per cent of the items from the midwifery kits and 50 per cent of the items from the diarrhoea kits. The removed items included trauma kits, antibiotics and gastrointestinal, psychotropic and life-saving medicines, among others. On 2 March, the Government of Syria allowed the United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent to deliver a portion of these materials to health-care facilities inside Madimayet Elsham. For the convoy to Kafr Batna on 23 February, 18,500 medical treatments were not allowed to be loaded onto convoys, including tablets and ampoules for mental health needs, 15 burn kits, one steam sterilizer, 30,000 ampoules and vials of locally procured antibiotics, analgesics, life-saving medicines and 34 items of standard WHO trauma kits. Items for the prevention of child malnutrition were also rejected. The United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent continue to request permission to include these materials in planned convoys to these areas.

Safety and security of staff and premises

50. On 2 February, two staff members of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent were killed when an air strike hit their vehicle while distributing bread near Anadan in Aleppo governorate.

51. On 10 February a joint WFP/UNHCR convoy travelling from Damascus to Aleppo was caught in crossfire while passing through a Government of Syria checkpoint near Salamiyeh. The convoy managed to escape safely and proceeded onwards to Aleppo. All convoy participants were safe and no damage to the vehicles was reported.

52. A total of 35 United Nations staff members, 33 of whom are UNRWA area staff, 1 from the United Nations Development Programme and 1 from UNICEF continue to be detained or missing. The total number of humanitarian workers killed in the conflict since March 2011 is 87. This includes 17 staff members of the United Nations, 53 staff members and volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, 8 volunteers and staff members of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society and 9 staff members of international non-governmental organizations. Of the 87 killed, 21 have been killed since 1 January 2015.

III. Observations

53. After five years of brutal and senseless conflict, over 250,000 Syrians have been killed and nearly half of all Syrians have been forced from their homes, seeking refuge within or outside the country. Many detainees have been tortured and beaten to death. The commitment of the members of the International Syria Support Group to use their influence with the parties to increase humanitarian access to besieged and hard-to-reach areas in Syria and to implement a cessation of hostilities has given Syrians a glimmer of hope. In towns across parts of Syria, there are signs of that hope, as families are once again walking in the streets and children playing in parks. We cannot squander this unique opportunity to finally bring an end to the conflict, once and for all.

54. I welcome the recent progress to deliver aid to several besieged locations in the first three months of 2016. During the same period in 2015, United Nations inter-agency convoys were prevented from reaching a single person in besieged areas. This represents positive progress, but remains insufficient. Access must extend to all 4.6 million people in besieged and hard-to-reach locations. Of note, the United Nations still has not received permission from the Government of Syria to enter several besieged locations, such as Duma and Darayya. The continued support of the members of the International Syria Support Group is required to ensure that the parties facilitate the delivery of assistance to all people in need on a sustained, unconditional and unimpeded basis, in line with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, where applicable. Ultimately, however, no amount of assistance to besieged areas can ever be considered sufficient: I once again call for the sieges to be lifted and people allowed freedom of movement.

55. While the recent deliveries to besieged areas are welcome, I regret that serious concerns remain with regard to attacks on medical facilities and the denial and removal of medical supplies and equipment from convoys to these locations. There can be no possible justification for the removal of items to treat child malnutrition or basic medicines to save lives. In addition, civilians in these areas require freedom of movement to seek the assistance and medical care they desperately need. I call on the parties to the conflict, particularly the Government of Syria, to ensure that civilians can leave areas to seek the treatment they need safely, without delay and

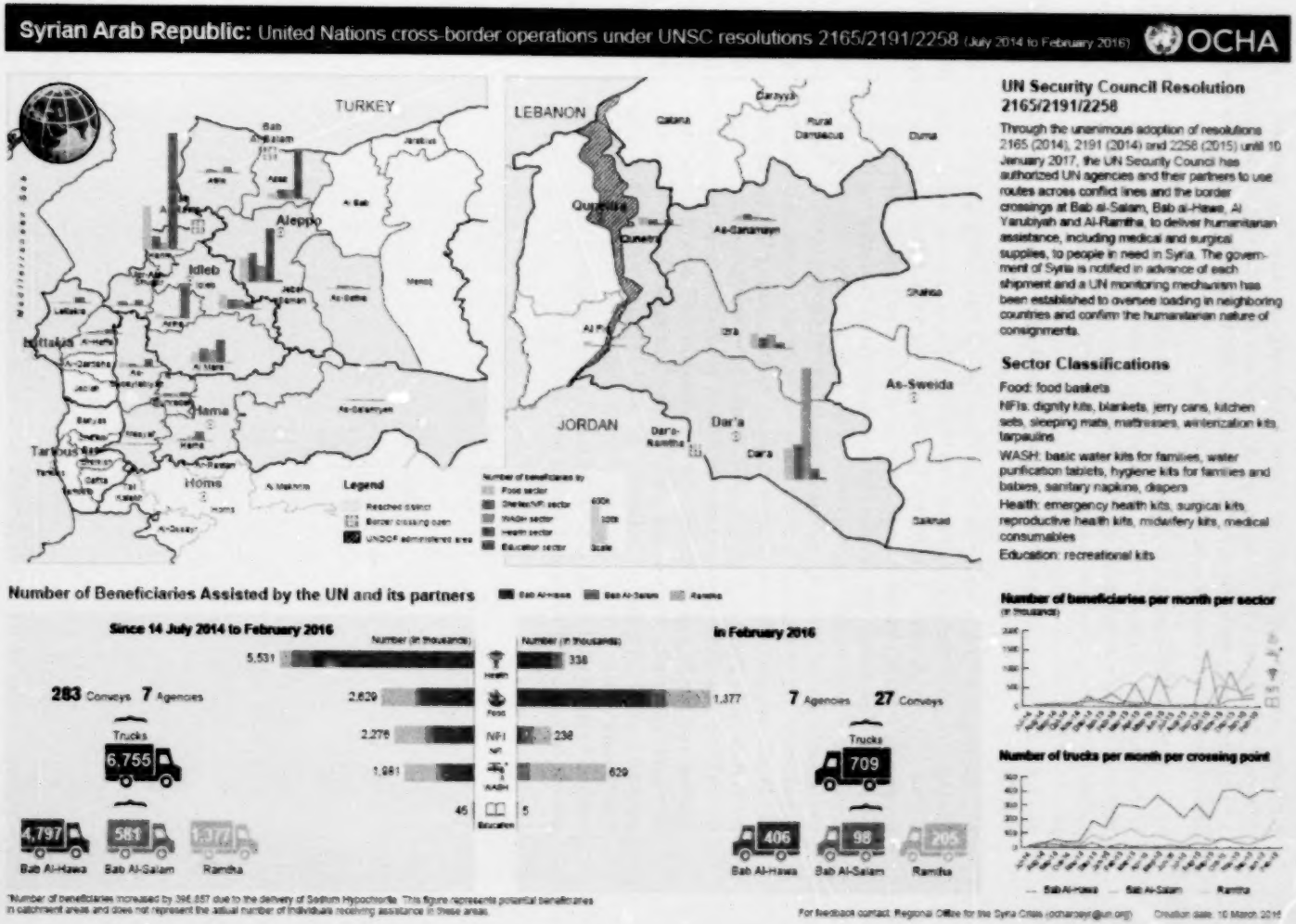
hindrance, and that all necessary medical and surgical items are allowed to be delivered. All parties who are imposing the siege and attacking medical facilities, as well as committing unlawful detention, must be reminded that these acts constitute a serious violation of international humanitarian law.

56. At this critical juncture in the Syria crisis, I commend the extraordinary efforts of humanitarian workers who, despite all the challenges, have delivered aid to millions of people month after month over the course of the past five years. Syrians themselves have played the lead role in alleviating the suffering of their fellow people. It has come at a high cost, as 87 humanitarian workers have lost their lives and hundreds of medical workers have been killed. I pay tribute to their bravery and sacrifice.

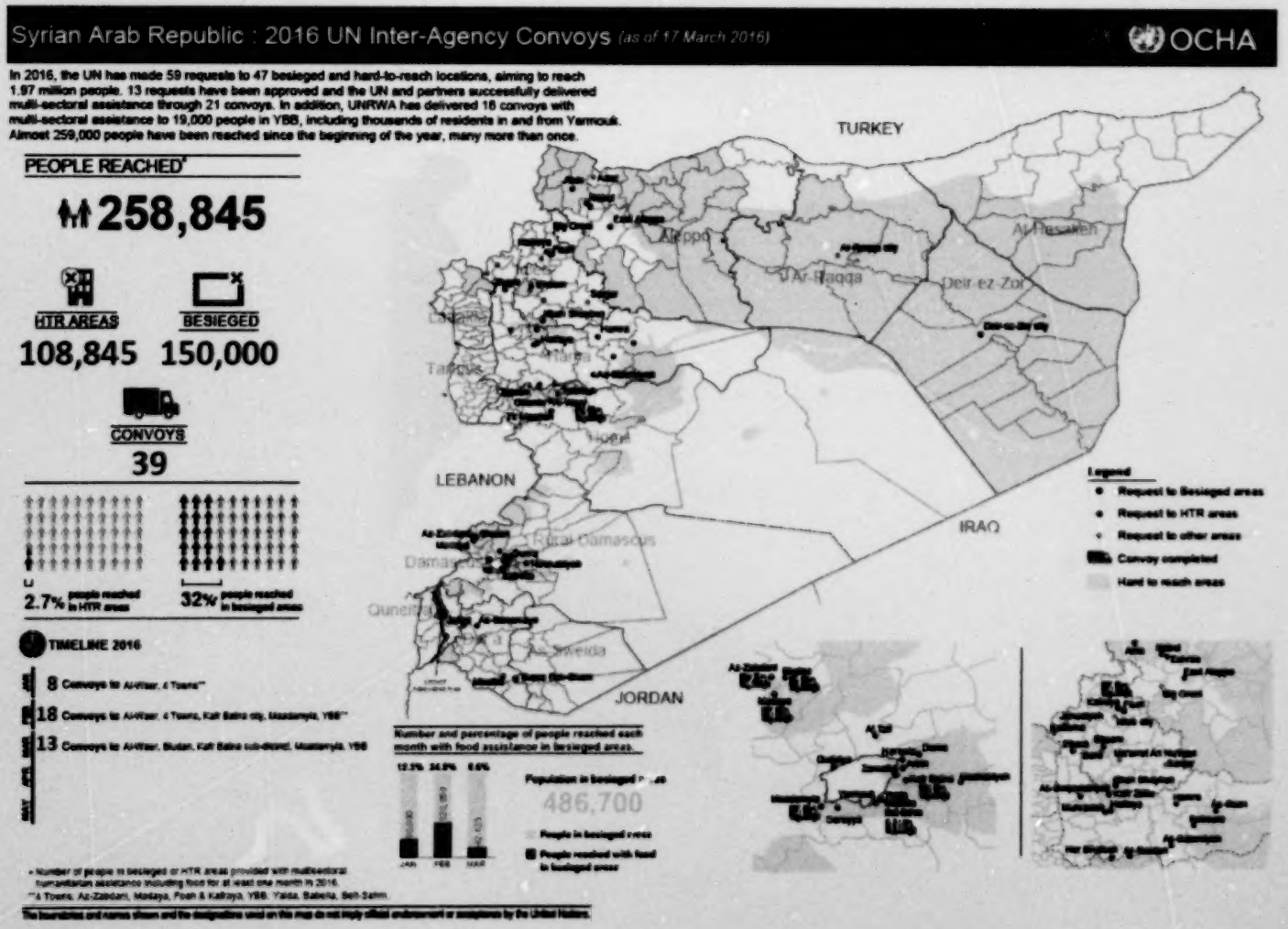
57. During the first week of February, my Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, convened the first round of intra-Syrian talks in Geneva. Subsequently, the United Nations decided to temporarily suspend the talks because of unresolved procedural matters and the dramatic deterioration of the humanitarian situation on the ground. Since then, the situation has gradually improved, creating the necessary conditions for the formal negotiations to resume on 14 March in pursuit of the full implementation of Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 as the basis for a Syrian-led political transition. As demanded repeatedly by the Security Council in its resolutions, it is imperative for the parties to the conflict to protect civilians and guarantee humanitarian access. For the ongoing negotiations to be meaningful and productive, it is important that all Syrians see tangible progress through the reduction of violence, the release of detainees, especially women and children, and increased access to humanitarian assistance, with the parties adhering to their obligations under international humanitarian law. I urge all parties not to miss the opportunity to engage constructively in the United Nations-led political process and to be fully prepared to present options on their visions for a political transition.

Annex

Map 1


Syrian Arab Republic: United Nations cross-border operations under UNSC resolutions 2165/2191/2258 (July 2014 to February 2016)
OCHA
TURKEY
LEBANON
JORDAN
Aleppo
Idleb
Hama
Homs
Tartous
Lattakia
Quneitra
Dara'a
As-Sweida
Damascus
Rural Damascus
Legend
Reached district
Border crossing point
UNDOF administered area
UN Security Council Resolution 2165/2191/2258
Through the unanimous adoption of resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015) until 10 January 2017, the UN Security Council has authorized UN agencies and their partners to use routes across conflict lines and the border crossings at Bab al-Salam, Bab al-Hawa, Al Yarubiyah and Al-Ramtha, to deliver humanitarian assistance, including medical and surgical supplies, to people in need in Syria. The government of Syria is notified in advance of each shipment and a UN monitoring mechanism has been established to oversee loading in neighboring countries and confirm the humanitarian nature of consignments.
Sector Classifications
Food: food baskets
NFIs: dignity kits, blankets, jerry cans, kitchen sets, sleeping mats, mattresses, winterization kits, tarpaulins
WASH: basic water kits for families, water purification tablets, hygiene kits for families and babies, sanitary napkins, diapers
Health: emergency health kits, surgical kits, reproductive health kits, midwifery kits, medical consumables
Education: recreational kits
Number of Beneficiaries Assisted by the UN and its partners
Since 14 July 2014 to February 2016
283 Convoys 7 Agencies
Trucks 6,755
4,797 Bab Al-Hawa
581 Bab Al-Salam
1,377 Ramtha
5,531
2,629
2,276
1,981
45
Health
Food
NFI
WASH
Education
in February 2016
7 Agencies 27 Convoys
Trucks 709
406 Bab Al-Hawa
98 Bab Al-Salam
205 Ramtha
338
1,377
238
629
5
Number of beneficiaries per month per sector
Number of trucks per month per crossing point
Bab Al-Hawa
Bab Al-Salam
Ramtha
*Number of beneficiaries increased by 396,857 due to the delivery of Sodium Hypochlorite. This figure represents potential beneficiaries in catchment areas and does not represent the actual number of individuals receiving assistance in these areas.
For feedback contact: Regional Office for the Syria Crisis (ocharosyr@un.org)
Creation date: 10 March 2016

Map 2


Syrian Arab Republic : 2016 UN Inter-Agency Convoys (as of 17 March 2016)
OCHA
In 2016, the UN has made 59 requests to 47 besieged and hard-to-reach locations, aiming to reach 1.97 million people. 13 requests have been approved and the UN and partners successfully delivered multi-sectoral assistance through 21 convoys. In addition, UNRWA has delivered 16 convoys with multi-sectoral assistance to 19,000 people in YBB, including thousands of residents in and from Yarmouk. Almost 259,000 people have been reached since the beginning of the year, many more than once.
PEOPLE REACHED*
258,845
HTR AREAS
108,845
BESIEGED
150,000
CONVOYS
39
2.7% people reached in HTR areas
32% people reached in besieged areas
TIMELINE 2016
8 Convoys to Al-Wer, 4 Towns**
18 Convoys to Al-Wer, 4 Towns, Kafr Batna city, Moadamiya, YBB**
13 Convoys to Al-Wer, Rural, Kafr Batna sub-district, Moadamiya, YBB
* Number of people in besieged or HTR areas provided with multi-sectoral humanitarian assistance including food for at least one month in 2016.
** 4 Towns: Az-Zabdani, Madaya, Foah & Kafraya, YBB: Yalda, Babella, Beit Sahm.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
TURKEY
Aleppo
Ar Raqqa
Al Hasakeh
Deir ez Zor
LEBANON
IRAQ
JORDAN
Rural Damascus
Damascus
Quneitra
As-Sweida
Legend
Request to Besieged areas
Request to HTR areas
Request to other areas
Convoy completed
Hard to reach areas
Number and percentage of people reached each month with food assistance in besieged areas.
Population in besieged areas
486,700
People in besieged areas
People reached with food in besieged areas